

## Second Sunday of Easter

April 24, 2022

### Introduction to the Day

In spite of all we have heard and all we have seen, it is often hard to believe. Because it is hard to believe, we will invest ourselves in the Easter mystery for fifty days (a week of weeks). Because it is hard to believe, John the evangelist will provide sign after sign celebrating Jesus' victory over death. Because it is hard to believe, the risen Jesus will return to us again and again in the mystery of holy communion, inviting us to touch and taste his presence, and offering us his peace.

### Thanksgiving for Baptism

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

In the waters of baptism,  
we have passed over from death to life with Jesus  
Christ,  
and we are a new creation.

For this saving mystery, and for this water, let us  
bless God,

who was, who is, and who is to come.

*Water may be poured into the font as the presiding  
minister gives thanks.*

We thank you, God, for your river of life,  
flowing freely from your throne:

through the earth,  
through the city,  
through every living thing.

You rescued Noah and his family from the flood;  
You opened wide the sea for the Israelites.

Now in these waters you flood us with mercy,  
and our sin is drowned forever.

You open the gate of righteousness  
and we pass safely through.

In Jesus Christ, you calm and trouble the waters.  
You nourish us and enclose us in safety.

You call us forth and send us out.

In lush and barren places, you are with us.

You have become our salvation.

Now breathe upon this water  
and awaken your church once more.

Claim us again as your beloved and holy people.  
Quench our thirst; cleanse our hearts; wipe away  
every tear.

To you, our Beginning and our End,  
our Shepherd and Lamb,

be honor, glory, praise, and thanksgiving,  
now and forever.

**Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn** "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice and Sing!"

#385 vs. 1,3,4

**Greeting** – The Grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.

**And also with you.**

### Prayer of the Day

**O God of life, you reach out to us amid our fears with the wounded hands of your risen Son. By your Spirit's breath revive our faith in your mercy, and strengthen us to be the body of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

### Reading: Psalm 118:14-29

<sup>14</sup> The LORD is my strength and my might;  
he has become my salvation.

<sup>15</sup> There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the  
righteous:

"The right hand of the LORD does valiantly;

<sup>16</sup> the right hand of the LORD is exalted;  
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly."

<sup>17</sup> I shall not die, but I shall live,  
and recount the deeds of the LORD.

<sup>18</sup> The LORD has punished me severely,  
but he did not give me over to death.

<sup>19</sup> Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
that I may enter through them  
and give thanks to the LORD.

<sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the LORD;  
the righteous shall enter through it.  
<sup>21</sup> I thank you that you have answered me  
and have become my salvation.  
<sup>22</sup> The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the chief cornerstone.  
<sup>23</sup> This is the LORD's doing;  
it is marvelous in our eyes.  
<sup>24</sup> This is the day that the LORD has made;  
let us rejoice and be glad in it.<sup>[a]</sup>  
<sup>25</sup> Save us, we beseech you, O LORD!  
O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!

<sup>26</sup> Blessed is the one who comes in the name of  
the LORD.<sup>[b]</sup>  
We bless you from the house of the LORD.  
<sup>27</sup> The LORD is God,  
and he has given us light.  
Bind the festal procession with branches,  
up to the horns of the altar.<sup>[c]</sup>  
<sup>28</sup> You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;  
you are my God, I will extol you.  
<sup>29</sup> O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,  
for his steadfast love endures forever.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Children's Message**

#### **Gospel: John 20:19-31**

<sup>19</sup>When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." <sup>22</sup>When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

<sup>24</sup>But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

<sup>26</sup>A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>27</sup>Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." <sup>28</sup>Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup>Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

<sup>30</sup>Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup>But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to You, O Christ**

### **Sermon**

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

The Introduction to the Day eludes to the difficulty to believe that comes with this Easter Story. We are told that throughout the Season of Easter we will hear again and again John pointing to sign after sign of Jesus' victory over death.

Now, when we hear this story we immediately are drawn to pointing our fingers at Doubting Thomas. How could he possibly NOT believe the story that he is being told by the others?

We forget that just one week ago in our Easter Gospel from Luke, 13 times we heard some iteration of the fact that Jesus was not in the tomb. From the women stooping down to see it empty, through the two men on the road to Emmaus who literally have an encounter with the risen Christ, 13 times we hear about it.

Yet, we want Thomas to believe without having his own Jesus encounter.

Meanwhile, Thomas demands just that! "I need my own encounter for me to believe."

Again, we point fingers and call him the Doubter. When, in reality, he is the one we probably relate most to.

Many of us have heard this story over and over year after year. It is a story we know very well. It is a story that many of us could probably stand up and tell without needing our Bibles opened up to. In fact, we could probably tell most of the Holy Week story with little to no help. We know the whole week quite well.

The hosannas we shout as we wave the palm branches. We know it well.

The command to love as we enjoy the meal of forgiveness from Maundy Thursday. We know it well.

Christ's suffering on the cross at Good Friday? We've been there.

Shouting the Alleluia of Easter morning? Perhaps that is what we are best at.

But, there is a day in there that is perhaps most relatable, yet is often the least talked about.

Holy Saturday.

In life, we have all had our own Holy Saturdays. That time when we have been through the cycle of grief on Thursday and Friday, and wait for the hope of the resurrection on Easter Sunday. We know too well that that wait often takes much longer than a day. We know too well the need to experience the Jesus encounter of Christ coming in sharing, "Peace be with you."

This is an experience that the others in Jesus' life got to have. And it is an experience that Thomas, in the grief of the Saturday, yearns for. It isn't so much that he doesn't believe the experience that they have all had, he just wants it for himself. He wants that resurrection encounter that they all speak of.

Don't we all?

Some have had that resurrection moment. Some have had those encounters where the hope of the resurrection is truly experienced, beyond hearing of the promise of the empty tomb on Easter morning.

But there are others, the Thomases in our lives, who are longing for the hope of that encounter for themselves.

And, neither is wrong. It doesn't do the Easter Story any favors to name those who long for that encounter as doubters. Because they aren't. They, like every other, simply want to experience that hope.

There is another very important part of this text that ought not go unnoticed. And it speaks to the role that communities of faith play in bringing others to experience the hope of this story.

At the completion of the Thomas encounter story, we get the following, almost as an aside:

"<sup>30</sup>Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup>But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name."

Notice that it does NOT say that we get these stories so that we would believe at the snap of our fingers? It does NOT say that we get these stories so that we would believe without examining them in the context of our own?

Rather, the writer of John's gospel tells us that we get these stories, and other stories like it, the stories of Jesus' signs, SO THAT others would COME TO BELIEVE that Jesus is the Messiah.

Waiting for that resurrection encounter is sometimes a very long Holy Saturday. And, in that period of waiting, we hear the story told over and over and over again.

That is the role of the church. It is the hope of John's gospel that these stories are continually and communally told that ALL would come to believe in the hope and promise of the resurrection.

People of God, this is a call to action. Like the resurrection narrative from Luke, it may very well take 13 tellings of the story, or even more, for it to finally be experienced. But, that does not stop us from telling. Rather, it encourages us to continue to tell it. To continue to shout the Alleluia! To continue to do so as a community of faith. That all would know the hope of God's love for God's people

That is the Spirit that was breathed into that room, and it is the Spirit that is breathed into this room.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN

**Song of the Day "Be Not Afraid"**

**#388**

**The Apostles' Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

**Offering**

**Offertory Prayer**

Living God,  
you gather the wolf and the lamb to feed together  
in your peaceable reign,  
and you welcome us all at your table.  
Reach out to us through this meal,  
and show us your wounded and risen body,  
that we may be nourished and believe  
in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.  
**Amen.**

## **Prayers of Intercession**

Set free from captivity to sin and death, we pray to the God of resurrection for the church, people in need, and all of creation.

Holy One who acts righteously, equip your church as witnesses of your goodness to go and tell others of your abundant love, that they may believe that Jesus is our salvation and life. God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Renew your people's commitment to use resources responsibly and to live well with your creation. Invite us to recognize and nurture signs of resurrection life in the natural world. God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Direct those who are given human authority to lead with humility and compassion. By your Holy Spirit channel their attention toward serving those who are most in need. God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Uphold your children who cry out to you (*especially for Gena, Peyton, Kathy, Matt, Bob and Joanne, Jim and Sandy, Bob and Kay, Joe, Bill and Bonnie, David, Cassie, Keith and JoJo, Sherm and Mary, Frank and Heather, Verna, Bob and Sonja, Irene*). Wherever people are overcome by the fear of death, breathe into them your life and peace. God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Inspire those who lead your people in worship and praise (*especially the art and music ministries of this congregation*). With joyful motion and sound, send us forth with praise that we cannot keep to ourselves. God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Give us the words of your saints who, like Thomas, boldly confessed your Son as Lord and God. With Jesus our leader, empower us to live according to his ways. God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

In your mercy, O God, respond to these prayers, and renew us by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**Amen.**

## **Words of Institution**

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen**

## **Communion**

### **Prayer**

We give you thanks, generous God,  
for in this bread and cup  
we have tasted the new heaven and earth  
where hunger and thirst are no more.

Send us from this table as witnesses to the resurrection,  
that through our lives, all may know life in Jesus' name.

**Amen.**

### **Blessing**

God, the Author of life,  
Christ, the living Cornerstone,  
and the life-giving Spirit of adoption,  
✠ bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

**Sending Song**

**Hallelujah! We Sing Your Praises”**

**#535**

**Dismissal**

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Go in peace. Tell what God has done.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Announcements**

**If you purchased an Easter lily, please stop by the church Monday-Thursday 8-3:30 to pick yours up. Or share it with a friend.**

**Stand in the Light Memory Choir with Luther College Nordic Choir**

At the Pablo Center | May 23 | RCU Theatre

**FREE BUT TICKETS ARE REQUIRED – Contact the Pablo Center (715) 492-0240.**

**I WON'T FORGET - MEMORIES AND MUSIC**

Join us for an evening of choral music featuring the Luther College Nordic Choir from Decorah, Iowa and the Stand In The Light Memory Choir from Eau Claire, Wisconsin. This performance is in support of the Standing in the Light Memory Choir and the Aging & Disability Resource Center of Eau Claire County. Their work raises awareness and supports a strong community for adults with memory loss and those with disabilities.